

# socialist standard

January 2017  
Vol. 116 No. 1349  
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## End of a Myth

Why you can't  
have socialism in  
one country

**PLUS**

**Peak oil and capitalism**

**Must there be a ruling class?**

**Political spending**



**Amadeo Bordiga,**  
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# socialist standard

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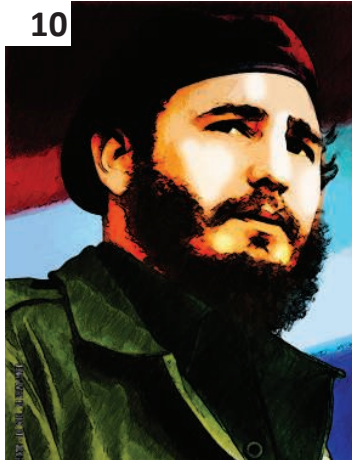
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## Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.



We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks

and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist

Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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## 1917 - 2017 Russia never was socialist

THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the Russian Revolution where the focus will be on the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917. The historic rivalry between the Western Powers and the world's first so-called "Communist" state has been presented as a struggle between Western 'liberal democracy' versus Soviet 'totalitarian Communism'. Many believed that the fall of 'Communism' would usher in an era of global peace. However, despite the arrival of Western-style representative democracy in Russia, relations between Russia and the West appear to be descending into a new 'Cold War'.

In spite of what its leaders claimed, the Soviet Union was never a 'Communist' state, as real communism (or socialism) involves the abolition of the state and the establishment of a global classless, moneyless society where the means of production are held in common. This was clearly not the case here, where the state owned the means of living and employed a class of wage workers. At the time of the revolution, social and economic conditions in Russia were not ripe for socialism, as it was predominantly an

agrarian economy based on peasant labour. Also the working class in Russia and elsewhere did not have the political consciousness required for establishing socialism. So, in these conditions, only a form of capitalism could emerge.

Like other capitalist countries, the Soviet Union needed to compete in global markets, secure trade routes and sources of raw materials. This inevitably led to rivalry with major capitalist powers, like France and Britain. Many in the Western ruling classes were horrified by Bolshevism and feared that their ideas would spread among their workers, especially in the context of the social and political unrest that erupted in the aftermath of the First World War. They also feared that Bolshevism could inspire the growing independence movements in their overseas colonies. Nonetheless, nation states do not go to war to uphold a belief system, they do so to advance their material interests. British and French support for the White Army during the Russian Civil War was as much about preventing the Bolsheviks from defaulting on Russia's foreign loans.

After the Second World War, the

United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the main powers, competing to control resources and trade routes. This led them into a military rivalry, which became known as the Cold War, and resulted in standoffs like the Cuban Missile Crisis. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early nineties, many believed that the Cold War had ended. In the new Russia, former state bureaucrats enriched themselves by coveting former state enterprises. However, Russia has since grown stronger and is attempting to reassert itself globally and reclaim its influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. This has led it to fight a war against Georgia and more recently to annex the Crimea and support the government forces in the Syrian Civil War. By expanding its influence, Russia is challenging the dominance of the Western Powers, and the latter have responded by enlarging the Nato alliance and surrounding Russia with military bases. This time, however, the pretence that the struggle is ideological has been dropped. It can now be seen for what it always was: economic and geopolitical.

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## How the rich suffer with their piles

THE NEWS late last year that Buckingham Palace was to receive a makeover to the tune of £369 million of 'taxpayer's money' was greeted with outrage by that section of the press which thinks it will sell more papers by simultaneously fawning over celebs and royals while also striking populist poses against wealth and privilege.

As we've often said in this journal, this taxpayer's money may appear to come out of workers' wages, but really it bypasses those wages altogether and flies directly from the employer to the Treasury. Thus it is not with outrage but with equanimity that socialists look upon the prospect of the capitalist class being forced to rewire and replaster Brenda's Royal Shed at their collective expense. Let them buy the old trout a gold roof while they're at it, and a new Xbox with the latest *Call Of Duty* and *Grand Theft Auto* pre-loaded, if it makes her happy.

Buck House isn't the only stately pile in need of remedial work. Many great houses in Britain are in a decrepit state as their former lordly owners pissed their inherited wealth up against a wall and left the bills to their descendants, who are now unable to keep up with the upkeep. Many have thus been donated to (or dumped on) The National Trust, though being a business like any other the NT isn't keen on taking on the huge repair bills these estates bring with them.

One grand mansion with hidden

problems is Highclere Castle, the Hampshire location of TV's *Downton Abbey* and lately doing a roaring trade in visitors. These visitors have to pay handsomely to see the house, and extra to see the Egyptian collection in the cellar, so they will probably assume that the Carnarvons who own the place are running a pretty lucrative racket. However Wikipedia reveals what the Highclere website doesn't, which is that the milords are stuck with a £12 million repair bill, that all but the ground and first floor, and at least 50 rooms, are uninhabitable, and that the owners have been living in a cottage in the grounds for the past seven years. A similar state of affairs can be found at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, currently swathed in scaffolding and where rooms are closed to visitors not because they are private spaces for the owners but because they are derelict. Likewise Castle Howard in the Yorkshire Dales, still unrecovered from a devastating fire in 1940 and now suffering serious water damage, with the south-east wing an empty shell. Go to just about any large stately home in Britain and talk to the staff, and you'll hear variants of the same tale of woe.

Some visitors who tour these gorgeous estates with their manicured lawns, sophisticated collections, exquisite furniture and priceless paintings will likely find themselves sympathising with the 'plight' of the current owners, whom they suppose to be as sophisticated as their surroundings. Socialists however would view this as a form of Stockholm Syndrome. The rich are nothing to look

up to, and indeed, when you look at their histories, rather the reverse.

At Blenheim Palace, known to at least one unhappy wife as 'The Dump', the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough inherited a bankrupt estate and coldly married into the American Vanderbilts in order to siphon their money into it. The Vanderbilts, dazzled at the prospect of buying a real English title, locked up their daughter Consuelo until she consented to the marriage. The Duke thereafter treated her so appallingly she later divorced him, and his second wife dined with a loaded revolver next to her plate. Eventually he had the water, gas and electricity turned off to force her out of the Palace.

Why therefore should socialists care a jot about the condition of these estates, whose existence continues to rub our collective noses in our own poverty while celebrating the crass self-interest and obscene luxury of the exploiting class?

Well, we should care, because in the future socialist society, these places are going to belong to all of us as part of our collective world heritage. You might imagine that country houses, castles, palaces, stately homes and genteel manor houses are not particularly numerous, but in fact they're everywhere. In England alone, and not including those in a state of ruin, there are around 2,700. Many have been converted for charitable uses or as museums, but a great many are still in private hands. Think what we could do with them.

Call it educational or call it art, but heritage matters. Nobody in their right mind would destroy the Pantheon in Rome simply because its first owner was a Roman emperor with despotic powers ruling a slave empire. Nobody would pull down Versailles just because Louis XIV was an autocratic ruler with a large ego. Unless revolutionaries are seized with some insane Mao Zedung-like mania for destroying all the art and culture of pre-socialist times, people are going to want these towering hulks to be in reasonably good nick. So if you love architecture or sculpture or you just like poking round posh people's houses, you don't need to feel you're betraying any socialist principles. Relics of oppression they may be, built on misery and blood and injustice without a doubt, but still beautiful works of art for all that. And once we've got socialism, you won't have to gyp at the price of admission.

PJS



What's behind the door?

# The Blurring Boundaries of Political Spending

*With the increase in inequality, the influence of corporate political spending is stronger than ever.*

In the current free market framework of global politics, regulation is perceived by capitalists as a barrier between big business and an increased accumulation of assets. These free market principles have been applied to many aspects of life, from the deregulation of the financial industry towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to the increasingly neoliberal state of political finance regulation. In the United States particularly, a common trend has been occurring with regards to political spending. In 2010, the United States saw a Supreme Court decision that would change the role of money in politics by deeming caps on political spending to be ‘unconstitutional’. This was a decision born out of the misuse of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the American Constitution and, having had a significant impact on political spending, corporations are now playing an increased role in influencing governments to be capitalist- friendly.

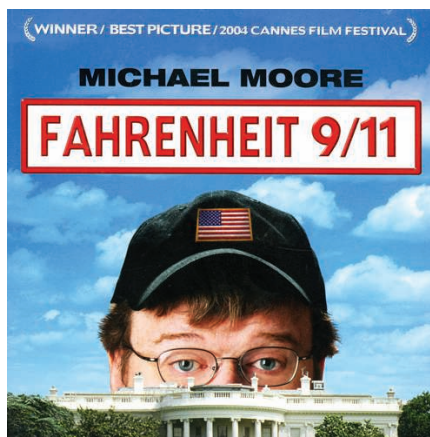
## The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and Corporate Personhood

In 1868, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was added to the American Constitution, with its purpose being to bring equality to all citizens of the United States. Putting this into context, the amendment was made in the wake of the American civil war, and its intention was to protect newly freed slaves from further persecution. Whilst this amendment was added to protect the people, the rise of capitalism as the dominant ideology in the United States has led to this legal construct being twisted to suit the needs of corporations. Capitalists argue that, as corporations are formed and exist within the confines of the United States, they should be entitled to the same constitutional rights as people. This idea has remained in the psyche of the United States since the addition of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and still holds influence today, with the Supreme Court case of *Citizens United vs The Federal Election Commission* being based around this theme.

## Citizens United vs The Federal Election

## Commission

This was a Supreme Court case held in response to legislation restricting corporate funding for political advocacy adverts during electoral periods. After deeming Michael Moore’s ‘Fahrenheit 9/11’ documentary to be a smear campaign against President Bush in 2004, conservative non-profit group



Citizens United produced a documentary named ‘Hillary: The Movie’ in the run up to the 2008 primaries. This film contained clips from interviews with



major political figures, in which they were highly critical of the career of Hillary Clinton. The Federal Election Commission took Citizens United to the Supreme Court as a result, stating that the documentary’s sole purpose was to influence the opinion of the public. However, Citizens United won the case, with the Supreme Court ruling

that caps on political spending violated First Amendment rights to free speech, essentially rendering defunct the legislation for this.

## Quid Pro Quo Politics

Whilst the Supreme Court verdict suggested that spending money comes under the remit of the First Amendment rights to free speech, this should not be the case. In capitalist societies, where the sole purpose of production is to accumulate as many assets as possible, big business will only spend money if there is a guarantee of returns on their investment. This causes an issue to the wider public as, with the mammoth increase in political spending since this decision, governments are pushed into the arms of corporations. Noam Chomsky is clear about this sentiment when he says “Concentration of wealth yields concentration of political power”, as the continued influence of money has blurred the boundaries between politics and business.

## Brexit Campaign

This theme of spending money to influence political issues has not just been a phenomenon in the United States. In this year’s EU Referendum, just over half of the donations given to groups from both sides of the debate were given by 10 individuals. Breaking down the totals of the top 10 donors, £6.9 million was donated to the Remain campaign, with £9.5 million to the Brexit camp. Thus, the ball has been removed from the court of the wider public when important political decisions are being made, with the tide now very much with the wealthiest individuals in the world. This is a damning statement, particularly when considering that the wealthiest 1 percent of individuals in the world now own at least as much as the rest of the 99 percent combined. It’s a worrying thought that, with enough money, anyone can get what they want. Just ask Mr. Trump.

**WILLIAM HORNCastle**

## World common ownership

By common ownership we don't mean state property. We are not proposing the science-fiction nightmare of all the Earth's resources being owned and controlled by a single World State. We mean the opposite: that there should be no private property or territorial rights over any part of the globe. The Earth and its natural and industrial resources should not belong to anybody – not to individuals, not to corporations, not to states. They should simply be there to be used by human beings to satisfy their needs.

World Common Ownership is not a new concept. When in the 1970s they were discussing dividing up the seas amongst States and individuals in the same way that the land has been, the idea of 'global commons' was put forward. And you had, of all people, President Nixon talking about making the seas 'the common heritage of all mankind'. The idea was that there should be no private property and territorial rights over them. The same has been proposed for Antarctica and the Moon.

What we are proposing is that this should apply to the Earth as well – that private property rights and territorial rights over any part of the planet should be abolished. This is the only basis on which we as the human species can set about arranging our relationship with the rest of Nature in a rational and ecological way so that the planet becomes a habitable place

for all of us.

Due to the development of the world market economy, the relationship between humans and the rest of Nature has now become a relationship between the whole human species and the biosphere as a whole. Which is a point that some Greens overlook when they propose going back to local small-scale self-sufficient communities.



Just look at the sort of problems that have been discussed at the various Earth Summits that used to be held: global warming, tropical deforestation, the thinning of the ozone layer, acid rain. All these are world problems – problems that ignore the artificial frontiers which criss-cross the globe, problems which concern the whole human race.

The calling of so-called Earth Summits and other meetings to deal with climate change are a recognition that there are no national or local solutions to these problems. But these meetings have been failures, and were bound to be, because solutions were sought within the framework of the present, profit-driven, capitalist world economic system. The leaders of states, driven by the system to engage in a competitive struggle for profits against each other, were expected to co-operate to solve ecological problems – problems caused by the competitive, profit-seeking system they support and uphold.

While it is clear that a question which concerns the whole world such as the possible consequences of global warming can be effectively dealt with only by unified action at a world level, it is equally clear that this is not going to happen under the profit system. The different states into which the world is divided have different – and clashing – interests. At most, all that can happen under the profit system when a global problem arises is 'much too little, much too late'.

The profit system, the world market system, must go before we can tackle these problems in a constructive and permanent way. It must be replaced by a global system of common ownership and democratic control. We must organise to take the Earth back from those who currently own and exploit it, and must make it the common heritage of all.



### The first lost decade since the 1860s

IN A speech in Liverpool on 5 December Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, described the current decade as 'the first lost decade since the 1860s' ([bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/speeches/2016/speech946.pdf](http://bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/speeches/2016/speech946.pdf)). At that time, he stated, 'Karl Marx was scribbling in the British Library, warning of a spectre haunting Europe: the spectre of communism.' Not quite, as Marx wrote about that much earlier, in 1848, when he was living in Brussels. But he would have been in the British Museum taking notes for his major work, *Capital*, that was to be published in 1867.

Before that, in 1864, Marx drafted the Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association that had been set in September of that year. In it, he noted a statement Gladstone had made in his budget speech to the House of Commons in April 1863:

'Dazzled by the "Progress of the Nation" statistics dancing before his eyes, the Chancellor of the Exchequer exclaims in wild ecstasy: "From 1842 to 1852, the taxable income of the country increased by 6 per cent; in the eight years from 1853 to 1861, it has increased from the basis taken in 1853, 20 per cent! The fact is so astonishing to be almost incredible! ... This intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power," adds Mr. Gladstone, "is entirely confined to classes of property!"'

Later, critics were to accuse Marx of distorting what Gladstone had said. The controversy is described by Engels in his Preface to the fourth German edition of *Capital* in 1890. Basically what happened was that Gladstone had exercised the right of MPs to alter Hansard if they had said something they didn't mean and had deleted the part about the increase in wealth and power being 'entirely confined to classes of property', even though this is what the newspapers the following day had reported him as having said.

Carney's speech was accompanied by a graph (chart 6 on page 5) which showed that in the ten years up to

1864 real wages fell. So Gladstone's initial statement had been correct. The increase in wealth during that period was 'entirely confined to classes of property'. Just as it has been during the current 'lost decade.' Carney quoted some figures which showed that, as then, the richer got richer:

'In recent decades, as global inequality has fallen markedly, it has edged ever higher in most advanced economies. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the income share of the top 1% has risen notably since 1980. Today, in the US, the richest 1% of households receive 20% of all income. Such high income inequalities are dwarfed by staggering wealth inequalities. The proportion of the wealth held by the richest 1% of Americans increased from 25% in 1990 to 40% in 2012. Globally, the share of wealth held by the richest 1% in the world rose from one-third in 2000 to one-half in 2010. The picture in the UK is complex but in general suggests relatively stable but high levels of overall inequality, with sharper disparities emerging in recent times for the top 1%.'

Plus ça change.



# Cameron's Selections

DRIVEN OUT by Brexit from 10 Downing Street and then from the Tory benches in Parliament David Cameron will be written into history through his talent for composing a welter of vacuous, discreditable phrases which did nothing to avert his decline. An early example of this was his assurance that with him in charge there would be 'no more Punch and Judy politics'. No more performances in the House of Commons when his reluctance to deal appropriately with some genuine problems of the people – the workers, the children, the voters – outside served only to provoke the Tory hooligan benches into a storm of bellows and false laughter designed to blank out all discussion. In 2010 there was his trumpeted conviction that '...if you trust people and give them more power and control over their lives, they become stronger, and society becomes stronger too, and I believe profoundly that we are all in this together'. Those final six words were to be repeatedly quoted as evidence of his enduring duplicity. There was not even a hint that he feared his government would be bitterly remembered for repressive, impoverishing measures such as the Bedroom Tax as the cause of so many desperately homeless people. Or the maliciously sprouting figures of those who need their local Food Bank to sustain them. And the degradation of JAM – the masses who, conforming to all the demands of the politicians, are compelled to exist on the basis of Just About Managing – in other words through the charity of Next To Nothing.

## A List

The Conservatives won the 2015 election, in the process wiping out the Coalition Lib Dems, through gaining a majority of seats which encouraged Cameron, as only the second Prime Minister to have increased their majority while in power (triumphantly, the first example was of course Thatcher) to proclaim that they were '...on the brink of something special' – which in reality was a government of false claims and pledges. And among the forecasts of a frighteningly successful future for them was the strategy of building a refashioned party more in tune with this vision. This was the origin of the so-called A List, an idea which had been in discussion since Cameron became leader in 2005. A few months later a party

committee set out to reduce the 500 hopeful candidates to between 100 and 150 on the assumption that this was the way to ensure a party which would be free of the prejudices which had hampered its prospects in the past.

## Portillo

The response among party members was varied. There was approval from Michael Portillo, on the grounds that at the time the Tories did not have a lot to lose as '...much of the Parliamentary Party is reactionary and unattractive to voters'.



Portillo



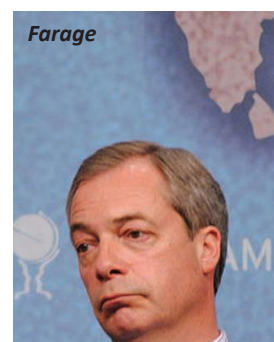
Soubry

in flashy trousers and presenting TV programmes mournfully quoting from *Bradshaw's Handbook* of railway history. The other side of the debate was scathingly represented by Ann Widdecombe, another ex-MP (and in fact no less than a Minister of Prisons) who condemned the List as 'an insult to women' which was 'storing up huge problems for the future'. But Widdecombe's TV experience was rather different to Portillo's because there was no chance of her influencing opinion by her few but wretchedly clumsy appearances as a contestant in *Strictly Come Dancing*.

## Broxtowe

But there were enough hopefuls in the List to persuade Cameron that it had introduced some hope and fertility into the Party. Andrea Leadsom, Priti Patel and Amber Rudd are among those who wriggled their way onto the Front Bench although not all of them have been impressive enough to avoid the conclusion that their selection was more

a matter of appeasing Cameron than impressing the voters. One of them has been Anna Soubry, who sits for Broxtowe in Nottinghamshire. This is a marginal seat, re-created in 1983 and held by the Tories until it swung to Labour in the Blair landslide of 1997. Soubry won it in 2010 by a majority of 389, which she increased in 2015 to 4287. She went through the process familiar to precariously elected A Listers in that she held a series of minor governmental posts until she chose to return to the Back Benches in July 2016, by which time she had done enough to justify the opinion of Sam Carr in the *Independent* that she had '...a record of unusually free speech', among a few other embarrassments. During her original attempt at election, for Gedling in Nottingham in 2005, she declared herself to be 'ashamed' at living in that city because of what she perceived as its serious reputation for crime. During her early time as an MP she was embarrassed to be informed that she had employed a party member who campaigned for the return of slavery.



Farage

## Farage

In the EU Referendum she came out as a firm supporter of the Remain side, which may have persuaded her to deal with Nigel

Farage as an opponent who '...looked like somebody has put their finger up his bottom and he really rather likes it' – an assessment she later excused as a 'light hearted comment'. Which could not have applied to her rather less colourful opinion of Alex Salmon whose participation in government was a prospect which provoked 'absolute horror' in her. (Salmon rated her as 'demented' and advised her to 'behave yourself woman'). So there can be no surprise at the record of Soubry's favourite causes. She supports the Trident submarine renewal; developing private treatment rather than the NHS; university tuition fees; the deployment of British Armed forces abroad in theatres of war such as Iraq and Afghanistan... No doubt David Cameron was proud of originating the idea of the A List as evidence of his place in history as an enterprising and dynamic leader. But we have had enough of such conceits. It would be better if in such matters we began to work our way through the alphabet.

IVAN

## UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

### LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: Chris Dufton 020 7609 0983 nlb.spgb@gmail.com  
South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.  
West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. [tenner@abelgratis.com](mailto:tenner@abelgratis.com)

### MIDLANDS

West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: vincent.otter@globalnet.co.uk. 01242 675357.  
East Midlands. Contact: Gareth Whitley, [gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk)

### NORTH

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Lancaster branch. Meets 2nd Sun (Jan 3rd Sun), 3pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane. Ring to confirm: P. Shannon, 07510 412 261, [spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org).  
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### SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: [spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org) 07973 142701.  
South West regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat of even months. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. 0117 9511199.  
Brighton Discussion Group. Contact: Anton

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Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. [peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk).  
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Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

### WALES

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## There is only one humanity

*“NO SOCIAL or revolutionary movement succeeds without a core of people who will not betray their vision and their principles. They are the building blocks of social change. They are our only hope for a viable socialism. They are willing to spend their lives as political outcasts. They are willing to endure repression. They will not sell out the oppressed and the poor. They know that you stand with **all** of the oppressed”* Chris Hedges, Political commentator.

Rather than passively accept their poverty, many Bangladeshis endeavour to escape to India but frequently pay the price. Brad Adams, Executive Director of the Asia Department of Human Rights Watch reported in an article in the *Guardian* (23 January 2011) that India's Border Security Force had killed more than 1,000 Bangladeshi civilians since 2000. The problem had come to prominence in 2011 when 15 year old girl was shot dead as she climbed over a barbed-wire border fence. 2017 will be another year of more militarised borders.

The United Nations Convention on Refugees defines a refugee as ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself

of the protection of that country.’ But why is a refugee fleeing political persecution more legitimate than a migrant fleeing a life in a dirty, over-crowded, disease-ridden, dangerous slum where work is the drudgery of a sweatshop for very low wages and little job security? And what about the victims of the politics and economics of climate-change. Droughts have uprooted farmers from their fields, eroding coastlines and floods have washed away homes and displaced many into the urban shanty-town slums.

More than 240 million people worldwide are international migrants. Refugees account for fewer than 10 per cent of the total and, in theory, they are the least contentious group, because countries have signed an international commitment to admit them. When such people travel with refugees, they are often derided as ‘just’ economic migrants. The term ‘forced migrants’ is sometimes used, mainly by academics and rarely by the media, to acknowledge the many people who migrate unwillingly but don’t fall under the Refugee Convention’s technical definition of a refugee and are therefore not entitled to international protection. This would include people who have abandoned their homes and countries because of drought or economic destitution.

Limiting our sympathy to only asylum-seekers and differentiating them from those others who are moving for economic or environmental reasons, fosters a view that they are undeserving of help or compassion even though they too are also genuine casualties of capitalism’s war – the class war. Whether or not they meet the official definition of a refugee, many desperate people are escaping dire conditions that pose a threat to their survival. Globalisation of the world’s economy has not been able to create enough jobs where there are people in need of work. ‘Free’ Trade and corporate land-grabbing has resulted in rural workers leaving their farms.

The World Socialist Movement describe economic migrants, asylum seekers, climate refugees simply as fellow-workers, fully worthy of our solidarity and in the words of Eugene Debs:

‘If Socialism, international, revolutionary Socialism, does not stand staunchly, unflinchingly, and uncompromisingly for the working class and for the exploited and oppressed masses of all lands, then it stands for none and its claim is a false pretense and its profession a delusion and a snare. Let those desert us who will because we refuse to shut the international door in the faces of their own brethren; we will be none the weaker but all the stronger for their going, for they evidently have no clear conception of the international solidarity, are wholly lacking in the revolutionary spirit, and have no proper place in the Socialist movement while they entertain such aristocratic notions of their own assumed superiority.’

People are social and our capacity for cooperation and adaptation allows us to envisage and build a world beyond the current economic and political system which many regard as unchangeable. Capitalism is beginning to become a dirty word again. People have begun to protest against the profit system and the effect it is having on the quality of life. An unorganised anti-capitalist rebellion can only end in disaster out of which, either the present elite reassert their control or a new ruling class would take advantage of the chaos to gain power. If we are going to get rid of capitalism, the people have to do it by a democratic structure. We need to organise ourselves collectively to create a state-free world society, one without passports and borders. The solution to the immigration crisis lies not with raising fences and razing camps but with the creation of conditions that does not necessitate people leaving their homes, their family, their friends and their neighbours. The reality is that the solution is world socialism. Make 2017 the year that you start doing something towards it.

**ALJO**



## Castro: Latin American nationalist

On 26 November Fidel Castro, one of the oldest dictators in Latin America, died. The announcement of his death was made by his brother Raul Castro on state television. His death was celebrated by the opponents of the government of Cuba in Miami in Florida, and it was also taken as sad news by many of the Latin America Leftists and supporters of the Cuban regime.

In 1959 Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Che Guevara were part of an armed rebellion which provoked the overthrow of the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, a government backed by the US for several years. Then, part of the ruling elite of Cuba shifted toward the support of the guerrillas who were fighting in the Sierra Maestra against the Cuban military forces.

After their victory, Fidel Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba initiated the nationalization of all the US holdings and assets, and all private land was taken over by the state. The US declared an embargo on the island.

Castro declared himself a 'Marxist-Leninist' and entered a relationship with the Soviet Union, and established a form of state capitalism like the one established by the Bolsheviks, and called it socialism. In a country where agriculture prevailed over industrial production, sugar was the main production that existed in the whole country, and most of the workers were peasants and did not have any socialist consciousness. The level of illiteracy was high in the rural areas of the country. The economic backwardness was as in most of the countries of Latin America.

After the defeat of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs which was financed by the US and backed by the CIA, and, at the peak of the Cold War period after the 1962 missile crisis during the government of John F Kennedy in the USA, and Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, an accord of no intervention was signed between the US and the Soviet Union.

Several social and economic reform programmes were implemented such as state-run medical services, public transportation, and public education. A large programme of education was initiated throughout the country,

A long period of stagnation, poverty, and scarcity began. While the government blamed this on the embargo imposed by the US, they never recognized that so-called socialism in one country was an impossibility and that despite collaboration with the Soviet Union, which also proclaimed itself a socialist country, the economic laws of capitalism prevailed in the country. Most of the followers of Cuban 'socialism' in Latin America blamed Cuba's problems simply on the US embargo, and never recognized the class character of the ruling elite, and the economical exploitation of the Cuban workers.

For many years, the Latin American left proclaimed Fidel Castro as the leader and commander in chief of the Cuban revolution, and a bastion of socialism in that region where many guerrilla groups were financed by Cuba on behalf of the



Soviet Union during the period of the Cold War. Most of those groups were defeated by the military forces of several Latin American countries.

The whole region of Latin America is a clear indication that socialism cannot be established by a small group of armed individuals. The great majority of the class-conscious-less workers never gave support to any of these groups, including the guerrillas of Manolo Tavaréz Justo, and the invasion of Francisco Caamaño in the Dominican Republic, who at the end did not obtain the support of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Government. In the same manner Che Guevara did not receive any support from the Communist Party of Bolivia.

Che Guevara was assassinated in Bolivia trying to obtain the support of the peasants to carry out the same revolt that took place in Cuba in 1959, and the guerrillas that accompanied him were killed or imprisoned. Within the Cuban leadership he was the only one who verbally advocated a moneyless society but after the Fidelista guerrillas took power he became the Minister of Commerce, and he was in charge of the Central Bank of Cuba, which contradicted his aspiration for a socialist society without money.

Despite their socialist and Marxist rhetoric and phraseology none of the leaders of the Cuban revolution including Fidel Castro ever had a real conception of what a socialist society should be. Most of the speeches and writings of Fidel Castro show that he was an apologist of Latin American Nationalism and later representative of the struggle of the Latin American capitalist class to liberate themselves from the influence of the US capitalist, like Domingo Perón in Argentina, and Ernesto Cardenas in Mexico, and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

The case of Cuba is a living example of what the Socialist Party and the companion parties of the World Socialist Movement have indicated for many years, which is that socialism cannot be established in one single country, and that it must be established in a world scale by the vast socialistically conscious majority of the workers, and that socialism cannot be established in an economical backward society to be a free access society. That is the reason why the Cuban regime had to initiate a rationing programme with the excuse to create equality among the workers, while the ruling elite enjoyed all kinds of privileges and benefits.

**MARCOS**

# Peak oil

# capitalism

# and

*"Securing adequate oil supplies was ... an important element in all the major wars of the twentieth century and in the United States' two most recent interventions in the Middle East."*

(Matthew R. Simmons: *Twilight in the Desert*)

Oil is a bit like the dinosaurs: it was made millions of years ago and is not being made any more. Among the most useful of nature's products it will continue to be essential to modern day life for some time to come. But it is finite and will one day run out. It could be about to reach its maximum rate of production, and barring new discoveries or improved recovery techniques, increasing demand will meet dwindling supplies – if it has not already done so. "Peak Oil" will have been reached.

The crude oil that is pumped out of the ground and which currently underpins large sections of the world economy was formed in two or three geological periods of intense global warming and not outside these. It's a paradox that something formed in a period of global warming could now be contributing to a further period of global warming.

There are two main schools of thought regarding the future of oil production.

## The optimists

First there are what might be called the optimists. They argue that while it is true that there are problems regarding the future of energy as a whole (and oil in particular) there are solutions that could be adopted. Anyone not adopting this point of view is labelled a doom-sayer or a Cassandra.

Faced with a predicted shortage the optimists suggest increasing the supply and/or decreasing the demand for, or reliance on, oil. They say that the claim that the world is 'running out of oil' has been heard before. True – this was a cry heard in the 1970s. They claim that there is more oil yet to be discovered and oil-importing economies should stop relying on oil fields in politically sensitive or unstable parts of the world by diversifying their sources.

Technological solutions such as increasing efficiency in use are also suggested. This is already in hand, though savings made in this way can be cancelled out by increases in demand. Increased efficiency in extraction has been implemented in the past but there is reason to think that all the wheels have by now been invented.

The shortfall between demand and production predicted by Peak Oil theorists has been met in recent years by supplies of hydrocarbons from 'non-conventional' sources such as shale formations and tar sands. However according to some these have only delayed the arrival of the point at which the production of oil reaches its historical maximum after which production will inevitably decline.



The development of these new sources was greeted with much hoopla and promises of lower petrol prices, and the Peak Oil debate was overtaken by other concerns such as climate change. For some time the optimists held the field.

## The pessimists

The debate has been revived in the past two or three years with serious revisions of previous industry estimates of the amount of oil actually recoverable. US Federal energy authorities have, for example, downgraded the industry estimated potential of the massive Monterey Shale deposits from 13.7 billion barrels to a measly 600 million barrels – a reduction of over 90 per cent (*Los Angeles Times* 20 May 2014).

Writing in the journal *Nature* (4 December 2014) Mason Inman drew attention to President Obama's assurance of '... a supply of natural gas that can last America nearly 100 years.' Inman considers such forecasts to be based on early, incomplete, and sometimes doubtful data. A careful



Roosevelt in the 1940s through Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton to George W Bush have declared access to oil to be a matter of 'vital national interest' to the US. By vital national interest they mean interests they are prepared to advance and defend using deadly military force – as they did in Iraq. This is not just the Americans playing hardball. They are following the unavoidable logic of capitalist politics and class interests. And they are doing only what the British and others before them have done.

What confuses the picture at present is the low price of oil, due in part to the fracking bonanza and in part to Saudi Arabia dumping oil on the market in a bid to undercut Russian and

examination of the assumptions behind such bullish forecasts suggest that they may be 'overly optimistic' and that the current boom is unlikely to last beyond 2040.

Also questioning such forecasts is a lengthy report from David Hughes of the Post Carbon Institute. He concludes that oil output from the two major US shale deposits – responsible for nearly two-thirds of such production – will likely peak some time this decade and then drop by 2040 to a fraction of today's totals far below the official US Department of Energy projections:

'Although shale gas production will rise in the short term, until the 2020 time-frame, the DOE's assumption that growth will continue to levels more than 100 per cent higher than today by 2040 is not supported by the data. An analysis of seven major shale gas plays comprising 88 per cent of DOE's forecast production through 2040 suggests production rates will be about one-third of the DOE's forecast in 2040 for these plays, and that production from these plays will peak as early as 2016' (*Drilling Deeper: A Reality Check on US Government Forecasts*, Post Carbon Institute, 27 October 2014) [<http://www.postcarbon.org/drilling-deeper/>].

## Geopolitics

The distribution of oil deposits across the globe is very uneven. Access to it by those who have little or none is hedged around by a number of political constraints. About fifty or so states have deposits capable of exploitation but of the vast bulk of the world's proven oil reserves, some two thirds is situated in Saudi Arabia and four of its Gulf neighbours. So there is also the problem of concentration, in a politically unstable part of the world.

But oil is not just any old commodity. Oil is different. It is a *strategic* commodity. Control over access to oil bears heavily on the survival of states as continuing and independent political entities and their economic well-being – i.e. their ability to continue making profits.

Several US Presidents from Franklin D

Iranian profits. A low price means a withdrawal of investment in R&D and a lack of new field exploration, which can then exacerbate the appearance of an oil decline. In the long term though, if supplies of oil become increasingly tight then inevitably competition for the remaining supplies will become fiercer. The hunt for supplies across the world will be joined by those emerging capitalist economies now undergoing rapid industrialisation and economic growth and contributing to the demand for oil at a time when supplies may be going into long term decline.

In 1950 two thirds of the world's oil came from what has been called 'the north'. What's left of the world's oil is found almost exclusively in the 'third' world – the global 'south', not more than say a dozen countries if you include the Caspian Sea region. These countries are not yet fully developed capitalist political entities and are rent with factional and dynastic rivalry. They seldom have other sources of wealth, and internal and international competition over the ownership and control of an increasingly valuable resource, and over routes for pipelines to get it to its markets, is likely to intensify.

GWYNN



# Power, overt and covert

The concept of power is an important but contested one. For socialists the question is an important as they are engaged in a process challenging and ultimately transforming the existing power relations of society. How power is defined determines what is examined and what our conclusions about it will be. This article looks at how some key contemporary writers have approached the problem.

Writing in the 1960s, Robert Dahl came to the conclusion that while there was an apparent tension between equal access to voting rights and unequal access to power resources – such as ‘knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources’ – a small elite did not dominate policy making and that a wide range of actors did take an active part in the process. Dahl based his work around study of political activity in New Haven, Connecticut, US and focused exclusively on the final decision-making stage of the policy process, where the actions of the various actors could visibly be studied. He measured success in terms of having a proposed policy accepted.

Bachrach and Baratz, in a later study, saw this as a shortcoming of Dahl’s work and argued that power can be exercised as much by keeping issues off the political agenda as by having a policy approved. For them Dahl’s focus on overt power failed to capture the whole picture, where covert influence – such as the press’s and politics ability to control the terms of the debate – played an important role. When an issue reaches the stage of political discussion a certain amount of obstacles have already been overcome.

Further criticism was raised by Steven Lukes, who looked at how the preferences of actors involved in the process of policy development were shaped and developed. For an issue to become a candidate for a prospective policy it has to be framed in such a way as to motivate sufficient interest and salience. Lukes argued that the way in which people think about an issue – about what is valid, realistic or fair – is shaped by the dominant values of their society and that these values therefore exercise a kind of latent power. For a certain set of ideas or values to become socially dominant a vast amount of persuasion and leadership must have already been drawn upon. Lukes was concerned with the broad value structures of society and how these shape outcomes.

Taken together these three outlooks can be seen as representing what Lukes in his 1974 book *Power: A Radical View* called the ‘three dimensions of power’. Dahl focuses on the visible vote winning and proposal acceptance, as one dimension. Bachrach and Baratz add the ‘none visible’ power of agenda setting as a second dimension of power. Lukes adds the third dimension, the most hidden aspect of setting the social norms and values that steer agenda setting. It is this third dimension that is of most interest to socialists, since socialism is not currently on the agenda and common opinion would still seem to be against it.

Many regular readers of the *Socialist Standard* may note the similarity between Lukes’ third dimension of power and Marx’s and Engels’ writings on ideology and false consciousness, and Luke’s would not deny this. The idea is that people do not act according to their real or objective interests because these have been clouded by false consciousness or a mistaken understanding of the facts. There are generally two objections to this proposition. The first is that the claim



makes reference to some kind of privileged access to true knowledge; that someone, other than the person in question, is better determined to know their real interests than they are themselves. The second, more recent, criticism is that there cannot be such a thing as ‘false’ consciousness since there are multiple ‘true’ consciousnesses each generated and sustained by power. On this view, to impute false consciousness is mistakenly to believe that there even could be a correct view that is not itself imposed by power.

Lukes argued that it is possible to speak of false consciousness without claiming to have access to perfect knowledge. Our desires and beliefs are not fixed, as many of the critics of false consciousness imply, but can to a lesser or greater extent be changed through reasoning and reflection. The power of others can and does play a role in influencing our reasoning. We can be mistaken and misled in terms of what we desire and what we believe, and mistaken in the underlying beliefs that form these desires, so ultimately we can be misled about where our real interests lie. To deny the possibility of our being led astray is to say something highly implausible. We have many different interests and in some cases because of inaccurate or incomplete information we will not know what our real interests are.

Lukes gives examples drawing on what Bernard Harcourt has called ‘the illusion of free markets’ - the notion that markets are natural and state intervention or regulation is unnatural, that markets are inherently efficient and left to their own devices will achieve equilibrium. This has the effect of shielding from criticism the distributions of wealth that occur through the market and masks the role of the state and its regulatory and legal framework that is behind every supposedly free market transaction. So through these means you can have the example of unemployed followers of the literature and ideology of the US Tea Party who, though dependent on social security themselves, call for the end of government and spending and welfare so as to boost the economy.

Claims like these are depend on the truth of the assumptions behind them. It is possible to attempt to separate out ignorance of facts about the social world, from theoretical disagreement about how to explain it, and we can do this without making arrogant claims about our possession of the truth. If we make judgments about others, we must be able to adequately justify them, and the same goes for judgments we make about ourselves. To quote Lukes ‘To judge well – to assess rightly what policies or programs are in one’s interest – one needs, first, to have an adequate understanding of the status quo; second, to have a convincing view of what is (counterfactually) feasible; and, third, to judge whether the costs of transition to what might be a better situation are worth paying. Here too the recognition of these sources of fallibility involves neither an arrogant claim to privileged access to truth nor the claim that there is nothing for such judgments to be mistaken about.’

DJP

One of my less endearing characteristics, according to some friends, is my condemnation of anything I find politically or culturally objectionable as 'bourgeois'. It is a polemical convention that socialists sometimes use as a description of values and concepts we find to be provocatively antithetical. For non-socialists this kind of political shorthand can be mystifying and downright annoying. So what exactly do we mean when we use this most cutting and dismissive of critiques? Is there a coherent set of values and principles that underlies the constant drone of contemporary cultural commentary which represents a conscious attempt to control our response to events and ideas and make them conform to political norms?

Before continuing our analysis we must define what we mean by 'bourgeois'. Historically it defined the capitalists who were to challenge the political hegemony of the king and aristocracy. After having been successful in their quest for power they now represent a ruling class. Today's 'middle class' can be defined as members of the working class who are relatively a little more affluent than their fellows and who, more importantly, aspire to the position and values of the ruling class. In many ways it is this section of our society that has attempted a political defence of their masters in terms of a value system (ideology).

Throughout this article when referring to this ideology it is not a reference to any work done specifically by members of the bourgeoisie themselves, but rather to the efforts of those who seek to proclaim and defend their legitimacy. Bourgeois economics for instance, is rarely, if ever, the product of the class that bears its name but rather that of those who are blessed and sponsored by them (including mainstream media etc).

So what is the essence of this ideology? Perhaps there are three elements that are always present: (a) the deification of the market, (b) the need for authoritarian social structures and (c) the contempt for real 'work'. Other bourgeois ideologists replace these three categories with: (a) rational economic exchange, (b) democratic security and (c) success as a celebration of 'hard work'. This

obvious dialectically opposed description of the same ideology is an illustration of what Marx called the 'internal contradictions' within the attempt to rationalise the ruling class's power. As to which description is more relevant or which better represents 'reality' let us now revisit our categories in turn.

Adam Smith's celebration of the 'invisible hand' in his work *The Wealth of Nations* was an important step towards the deification of the market system. It is both a supernatural metaphor for the economic mechanism of capitalism together with a quasi-religious admiration for it. In a way Marx also shared this admiration but only insofar as it made socialism possible. Marx systematically demystified capitalist economics and although he represented the climax of Smith's classical tradition, subsequent economists have sought to distance themselves from his work. Why? Because he revealed it for what it was, and still is – the exploitation of the majority by a parasitic tiny minority.

Most contemporary economists work within the narrow paradigms of capitalist ideology that refute the possibility of any alternative economic relationship and, through ignorance, proclaim it as the 'true faith'. As a result of their attempt to 'rationalise the irrational' most people are totally mystified and believe that these high priests of bourgeois ideology must have access to some profound secret that explains it all – when all they have, in reality, is their faith.

Given the stark contradiction between the social production of everything and the individual ownership of what's produced it is not surprising that this tiny minority feel the need for the threat of force to be available to defend their wealth. This is the only reason for the existence of the state and its enforcers: the armed services and police. Bourgeois ideology depends on a phantom of 'human nature' as greedy, envious and violent

threat. Enshrined in their 'laws' are the rights to defend their stolen wealth with violence and imprisonment. This authoritarian ethos becomes even

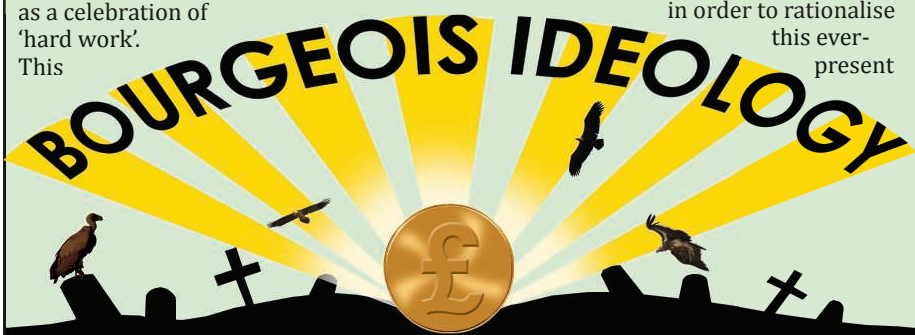


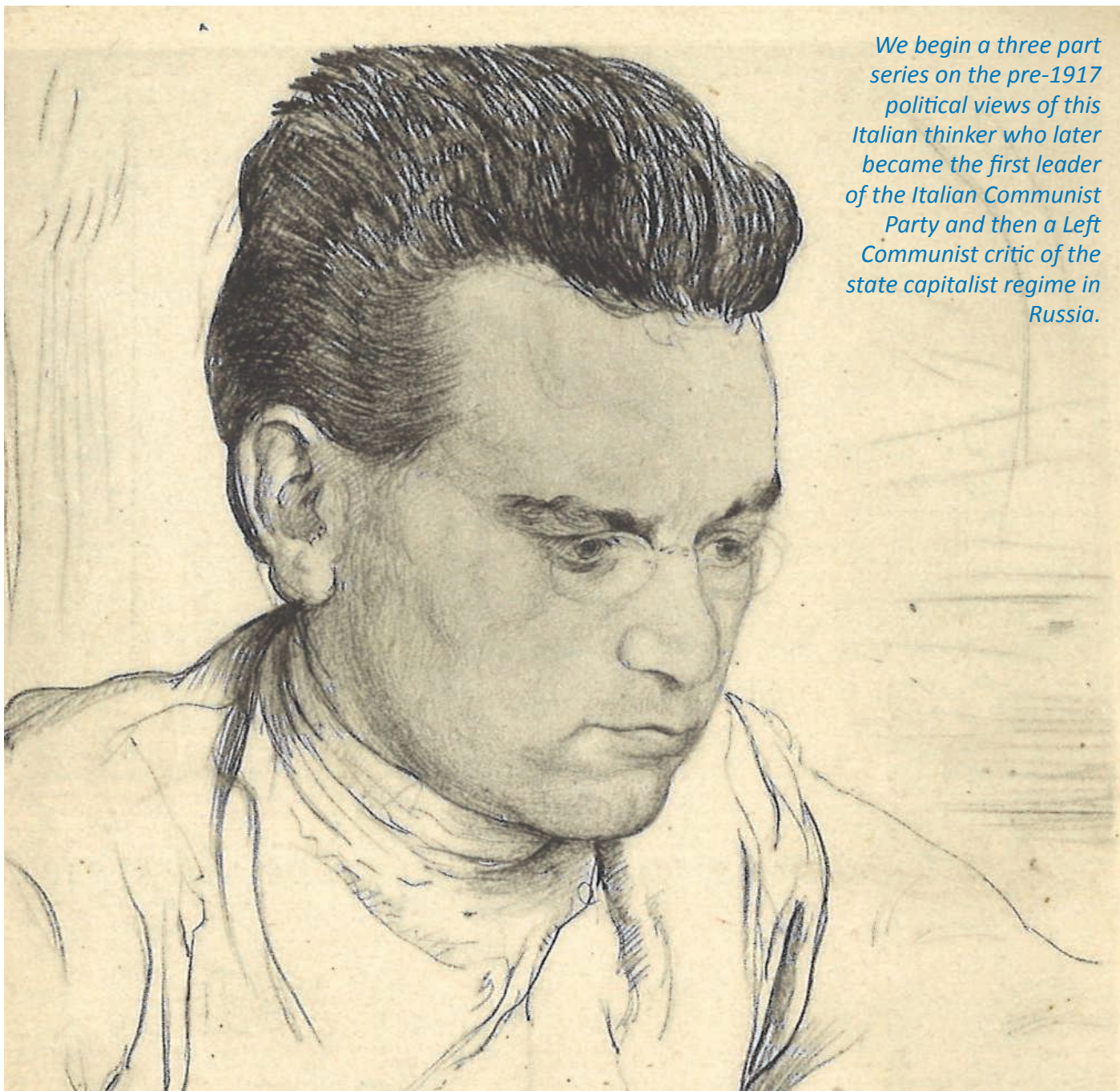
more dangerous when, as periodically occurs, capitalism crashes and the subsequent chaos encourages people to blame immigrants and foreigners for their economic suffering, which in turn, enables the authoritarian character of the state to flourish.

Bourgeois ideology has no interest in whether 'work' is fulfilling, meaningful or even destructive just so long as it's profitable. If, as socialists believe, the very essence of our humanity is our creative work and the benefits it brings to the community, then capitalism has rendered us 'inhuman'. An employer once told me, when asked what motivated him, that: 'I want to lie around on a desert island and never work again'. Such a sad superficial understanding of what brings happiness to humanity together with the obvious contempt for any kind of 'work' is an indictment of their ideological perversion of a basic human need.

This then, is the ideology created by the intelligentsia of capitalism. It is debatable how appropriate or informative the use of the term 'bourgeois' is for all of the intellectual and productive endeavours within capitalism, but given the above definition it seems always present to a greater or lesser degree. We have to bear in mind that socialism will be born out of capitalism and so some of its activities are potentially subversive and progressive. Although there is much talk of 'bourgeois science' it is hard to recognize an ideological element within mathematics or geometry; that particular debate has yet to be resolved. Of course the uses to which science is put in this benighted culture of ours are readily explained by bourgeois ideology but perhaps the 'scientific method' itself, however problematic, will aid and not hinder the cause of revolution.

WEZ





*We begin a three part series on the pre-1917 political views of this Italian thinker who later became the first leader of the Italian Communist Party and then a Left Communist critic of the state capitalist regime in Russia.*

## Amadeo Bordiga as instrigeant socialist

**A**madeo Bordiga (1889-1970) was probably the closest among Italian political thinkers and activists to the revolutionary ideas put forward by the World Socialist Movement. We would share his consistent opposition to reformism, militarism, and all forms of nationalism as well as some of his views on the use of parliament. We would, however be entirely opposed to his advocacy of insurrectionary violence, his aversion for democracy (which was determined by his identification of it with the freemasonry of his day), and his support for a centralist control model.

His early political activity began when he joined the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in Naples in 1910 at the age of 21 while a student of engineering. According to Bordiga's own later account, his enrolment in the PSI was a reaction to pressure being put on him to join the freemasons, which

he despised. The situation inside the PSI when Bordiga joined it was complicated. In theory, it was organized along the lines of the German Social Democratic Party, with the difference that the PSI did not have funds and so lacked organisers and professional politicians. There was a group headed by the leader and party secretary and as well as a parliamentary group elected by party members but there was often disagreement between the two, especially on political strategy. The parliamentary group was headed by Filippo Turati, who had been largely responsible for the creation of the party in 1882 and was a reformist despite the fact that he considered himself, and was often recognized as, an orthodox Marxist.

The PSI had expelled the anarchists in its ranks at its second congress in 1892 and likewise the revolutionary syndicalists in 1907. Yet in 1910 it was still home to a variety

of political positions. There were 'right-wing' reformists such as Leonida Bissolati and Ivanoe Bonomi, the 'left-wing' reformists of Turati and Giuseppe Modigliani, and the 'the revolutionary intransigent fraction' led by Costantino Lazzari, who, according to Luigi Gerosa, influenced much of Bordiga's early thinking with his 1911 pamphlet 'The Principles and Methods of the Italian Socialist Party'. In his pamphlet Lazzari harked back to the Party's 1892 programme and the various 'degenerations' of it that had taken place since then. As explained in a previous article (Antonio Labriola: A strict Marxist?, *Socialist Standard*, February 2016), it is arguable that the 1892 programme put forward a vision of Marxist socialism substantially as conceived by the World Socialist Movement today. Bordiga wanted it to remain faithful to its *maximum* goal, which was the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism rather than the *minimum* goal of changing capitalism by means of reforms. It was at this stage too that Bordiga started to develop the idea of a party that did not need leadership by individuals, but required, rather, a clear and unchangeable programme to be followed by its adherents.

Bordiga began stating this position in the PSI's youth magazine *Avanguardia* and writing in particular in opposition to the Italian government's colonial policy and to masonic anti-clericalism. In October 1911 when Italy invaded Libya, which was part of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, Bordiga attacked not just the government but alleged socialists in the PSI who supported the invasion. He also criticised revolutionary syndicalists such as Arturo (not to be confused with Antonio) Labriola who espoused the view of the economist Achille Loria that colonial expansion would present an opportunity for the socialist cause. Bordiga argued from the start that nationalism was a capitalist ideology which had nothing to do with socialism, since socialism was by its very nature anti-nationalist and anti-patriotic. This was an idea he would never depart from.

In the years 1911 to 1914 Bordiga and other like-thinking members of the PSI in Naples engaged in opposing those factions who favoured a policy of coalitions with capitalist parties, so-called *blocchisti* who they saw as revisionists. Bordiga wrote widely on the situation of the party in Naples, arguing strongly against the right of those factions to be in the Party, and also became the regional spokesperson for the Italian Federation of Socialist Youth.

In April 1912 Bordiga founded the 'Carlo Marx Circle' aiming at propaganda activity and the study of Marxist writings. Already in March that year he had denounced the action of some exponents of the parliamentary group such as Bissolati, Cabrini, and Bonomi for supporting the King of Italy after he had been wounded during an assassination attempt. Bordiga demanded their expulsion from the Party, something that actually took place at that year's Congress, incidentally allowing one Benito Mussolini to take up a primary position in the PSI. The Neapolitan Portici section had sent Bordiga as spokesperson to the Congress with the following motions:

1. to extend the tactic of 'intransigence' to local elections;
2. to exclude from the PSI members of bourgeois political associations such as the freemasonry.

In the same year, at the Congress of the Bologna Youth Federation, Bordiga was involved in discussions that took place on 'the question of the culture of socialist youth'. While some of the participants saw the youth movement as having the role of imparting basic political education to its members while not questioning the party's rulings, Bordiga proposed that the Youth Federation should have its own autonomy and

its own magazine and engage in its own struggles against the system. Bordiga won the day and, in the magazine *Avanguardia*, he wrote, in reply to Gaetano Salvemini, editor of the newspaper *L'Unità*, that education should be based on action and that instead of saying to the people 'you are exploited because you are ignorant, free yourself from the priest and you will be free', socialists should say to workers 'you are ignorant and cowardly because you are exploited, you are exploited because you submit to the yoke of slavery; revolt and you will be free and you will be able to become civilised.' For Bordiga, therefore, socialism was based not on education or political culture but on proletarian sentiment and action.

In November 1912, in the *Avanti* newspaper, Bordiga wrote a piece on 'Southern socialism and the moral questions'. Here he described the backwardness and inadequacy of the southern Italian capitalist class. He pointed out that the Italian State, which was managed by the capitalist oligarchy of Northern Italy, did not intend to develop the South, because the economic, agrarian and industrial development of the South could only 'harm the present monopolistic groups of big industries, which are protected and have in the South their natural market of consumption'. The ineptitude of the Southern capitalist class and the corrupt administration of the South was, he argued, exploited by local political factions to further their own self-interest and this was often with the support and collaboration of the clergy. The main opponents of this he saw as the anti-clerical bourgeoisie, who put forward the 'moral' argument that what was needed was an honest bourgeois administration, an uncorrupted and 'efficient' bourgeois capitalism. Bordiga opposed this way of thinking too, stating that 'thieving or honest bourgeoisies are the same thing' and that the PSI should be 'ultra-intransigent' against these 'moralists', because socialism demanded something quite different.

Rewriting of the PSI's pamphlet entitled *Il soldo ai soldati* ('On Soldiers' Pay') was assigned to Bordiga and was then discussed at the 1912 Bologna Congress of Socialist Youth. In this pamphlet Bordiga railed against the 'barracks' as being an institution of bourgeois democracy, but took the position on elections that they should be contested but without any kind of agreement with the bourgeois parties. At this time he saw electoral activity largely as a means of propagating socialist ideas and winning supporters, but his distrust of the electoral system grew as the PSI suffered recurring defeats in elections despite the considerable effort it put into them. Increasingly Bordiga was developing the view that the PSI had 'degenerated', that reformism had 'drowned' it and that what was important was a defence of its original revolutionary programme based on the formation of class consciousness and working class anti-militarism. In the article 'Our Mission', published in February 1913, Bordiga expressed the view that the PSI's role was to be the vanguard of the proletariat in the class struggle. In it he quoted the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin on the principle of mutual aid and affirmed what he saw as the natural altruism of the proletariat. At the same time he argued that it would be wrong to believe that the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class, dominated by means of workers' ignorance; instead it dominated by means of culture, by being able to impose its own culture on workers, so the tenets of bourgeois education took on a 'moral' dimension in workers' minds.

**CESCO**

(Next month: Bordiga's attitude to contesting elections)

*Is the social philosophy of Marxism a 'pernicious illusion', a variant of a 'utopian dream' which must cost humanity dear whenever an attempt is made to realise it? In other words is the realisation of socialism impossible?*

# Must there be a ruling class?

A powerful argument against its possibility has been advanced in the political sociology of Mosca, Michels and Pareto. Their arguments are impressive, especially when we remember that, writing before the First World War, they were writing prior to the establishment of modern totalitarianism, and at a time when optimism was as general as pessimism is today. The fact that their predictions have been partially confirmed by events gives them added weight.

Anyone who has had experience of modern politics would tend to agree with Mosca's theory; it has a high plausibility and contains much that is true. It asserts that political power in actuality never rests upon consent of the majority, that irrespective of ideologies or leading personalities, all political rule is a process, now peaceful, now coercive, by which a minority gratifies its own interests, in a situation where not all interests can receive equal consideration. As Mosca puts it in *The Ruling Class*:

'Political power always has been, and always will be exercised by organised minorities, which have had and will have the means, varying as the times vary to impose their supremacy upon the multitudes.'

The means vary from public myths and legal frauds to direct brutal force, depending upon the conditions of the time. Whichever side wins the masses who have fought, bled and starved, lose. Their 'saviours' become their rulers under the prestige of new myths. The essential content of minority control and exploitation remains despite the fact that mythical forms change. For Mosca this is a 'law' of all social life which can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of everyone except the 'dull,' the 'pious' and candidates for political leadership. It is a 'law' accepted by every political partisan as obviously true for other organisations but as a slander when applied to their own.

According to Pareto (in *Mind and Society*) differences between groups and conflict between their interests are always more persuasive than the harmonies which idealist philosophers discover more often than not by definition. Belief in the homogeneity of society is a fable for simpletons. Every society divides roughly into two classes – an elite which includes all who enjoy the fruits of recognised excellence in virtue of their strength, cunning, valour, wealth, social origin – 'the lions and foxes' – and a non-elite which comprises the rest of the population – the sheep. The elite, in turn, subdivide into a governing elite and a non-governing elite which mutually support each other. Like the poor, the governing elite we will always have with us. Whenever

its members lack quality of vigour, will, discipline and readiness to use force in an emergency new members are recruited from the non-elite, those who prove that they are not sheep after all. 'History is the graveyard of aristocracies.' But we will always have aristocracies. Power may be taken in the name of humanity, democracy and freedom; it can only be wielded by a few.

Michels  
*Parties*

in *Political* reaches the same conclusions, but they are based on a far more empirical study. Political power on behalf of any ideal, no matter how democratically conceived inevitable, involves the emergence of a leadership which in the (last analysis) controls the organisation. If it is defeated it is replaced, not by a functioning democracy, but by a new leadership. All democratic movements, therefore, are doomed by the 'iron law of oligarchy'. According to this 'the majority of human beings, in a condition of eternal tutelage, are predestined by tragic necessity to submit to the domination of a small minority, and must be content to constitute the pedestal of an oligarchy'.

*The ruling class, from a poster of the play of the same name by Peter Barnes*

**We say 'No'**

We should distinguish between the descriptive analyses and the theoretical explanations these writers offer. After differences in political rule have been taken into account most of their conclusions are valid. Ruling parties *are* controlled by minorities, they *do* rely on lies, chicanery and naked force. These are the props of political rule. We couldn't agree more. But in explaining these phenomena Mosca falls back upon a psychological theory of human nature as something given and fixed independently of its social and historical context. Almost every one of his major explanations and predictions involves



an appeal to an original nature, seen as essentially unalterable despite its varying expressions. Political laws are derived from the unchangeable elements in the nature of humans. Mosca referred to them as 'wicked instincts'. It is from this conception of original sin that his direct prophecies flow.

Pareto's doctrine of the constancy of the residues – instincts, needs and interests – is summed up in the sentence: 'The centuries roll by and human nature remains the same.' Michels weakens the force of his arguments which are drawn from the technical indispensability of the division of labour in all political organisations by deducing that 'the majority is permanently incapable of democratic self-government.'

An argument from human nature is invoked to support a sociological law. The analysis, although historical in form and content, is based upon a non-historical theoretical explanation. The sociological explanation is empty because it is devoid of history, that is, it is not based on theoretical activities of man but upon presupposed psychological qualities which give rise to these activities.

For the sake of argument we can grant their claims except when they speak in the future tense. Social problems are always specific, are always rooted in the concrete needs of a particular people at a determinate time. How they will solve these depends upon the conditions at hand – the knowledge they possess, for example, the knowledge of political and economic laws, the predominant social values and a number of other factors. The way people will act in the future will depend upon the problems they will have to solve and upon their state of knowledge, and not upon any unchanging nature. The problems themselves change with changing understanding. The problems facing the socialist are different from those facing the non-socialist. Different problems require different solutions, thus different behaviour, different ways of acting, a

different human nature.

It seems, then, that any attempt to find an invariant core of properties which constitute human nature will not stand up to sociological or historical analysis. We can only observe how people behave and act under certain conditions. What we are interested in is what people actually do and how they do it, and since human activity and behaviour is continually changing, the study of human nature must be a historical study. Historical traditions, habits and social institutions play a much more important role in political behaviour, and are more reliable in predicting the future than any set of innate impulses, residues, instincts or urges. By isolating the latter from their objective cultural setting, selecting from among them an alleged impulse to dominate, to be selfish, to fight, love or flee, the pattern of human nature can be cut to suit any political myth. This is precisely what the elitist theorists have done.

They have rendered a service in so far as they make us realise the need for devising institutional safeguards for the attainment and preservation of democracy. The most important safeguard being the replacement of the *institution* of private property by that of social property. These theories are pernicious in that they amount to a counsel of despair. If human nature is something unchanging and static then any social change is futile, since domination, oppression and exploitation will remain although masquerading in different forms and under different ideologies. Indeed Mosca and Pareto (Michels is in a different category, although a pessimist, he advocates struggle and social revolution) maintain that social revolution is meaningless. We cannot agree. We find the *status quo* impossible.

L.H.



## Allocating resources

SINCE IT was published in August financial journalists have been commenting on a paper put out by the US fund management firm Sanford Bernstein entitled *The Silent Road to Serfdom: Why Passive Investing is Worse than Marxism*. If passive investing is worse than Marxism it must be really bad! But what is it? It's when those investing money on the stock exchange, generally for others, invest it in a fund that passively tracks an index such as the FTSE 100, rather than actively picking stocks and shares themselves.

According to the paper, this impedes 'the efficient allocation of capital'. Under capitalism investment (and so what gets produced) tends to flow towards those sectors of the economy with the highest rate of profit. The argument is that if those in charge of investing money-capital chose to invest only in companies included in an index without checking whether there are more profitable

companies that are not included, then capital is not being invested in the most 'efficient' way.

The assumption here is that allocating productive resources according to what brings the highest monetary profit is the most efficient way to decide what should be produced, and when and where. Socialists challenge this on the ground that, from the point of view of satisfying human needs, it misallocates resources.

It leads to short-term projects being given priority over more useful longer-term ones. It leads to booms that inevitably end in an economic slump when production actually drops. It leads to financial bubbles. And, given the unequal distribution of income built-in to capitalism with profits being shared by a rich few and the income of the rest of us being restricted to our wage or salary, it leads to the wants and whims of the rich being given priority over the needs of the rest.

But where does Marxism come in to this? It wouldn't if the apologists in America for unrestricted capitalism hadn't spread the lie that anyone who advocates government intervention is a 'socialist', even a 'Marxist', whether they consider themselves one or not. Most in fact don't. After all, capitalism could not

exist without the help of the state.

According to the *Irish Times* (6 September), the paper argued:

'Capitalist economies rely on the market to allocate capital, whereas Marxists attempt to "optimise the flows of capital" by central planning.'

Certainly some who have called themselves Marxists have advocated that the government should allocate 'capital' in a planned way, but this wasn't the view of Marx himself. He did of course favour the planned allocation of resources to directly meet human needs, but of resources as such (materials, energy, etc) not in the form of money-capital.

He was quite explicit about this. In Volume Two of *Capital* he wrote:

'If we conceive society as being not capitalistic but communistic, there will be no money-capital at all in the first place' (chapter 16, section III)

and that 'in the case of socialised production the money-capital is eliminated' (chapter 18, section II).

To the extent that Marx may have believed in 'central planning' it would have been of actual resources and not of the distorted reflections of them in capitalist society as money-capital.



## The Benefits Trap

The most important film of 2016 was undoubtedly Ken Loach's passionate response to the government's austerity measures, *I, Daniel Blake*. The eponymous main character (played by stand-up comedian Dave Johns) is a 59 year-old joiner living in Newcastle. The story begins with Daniel recovering

from a heart attack. His GP has judged him not fit to work, and has signed the 'med 3' form (used to be nicknamed a 'sick note', now renamed in doublespeak as a 'fit note') he needs to claim Employment and Support Allowance sickness benefit. However, at the 'work capability assessment' which claimants have to undertake to continue to be paid, he is judged to have enough capacity to find work. Perversely, this decision by a 'healthcare professional' trumps that of the GP. So, Daniel (almost literally) half-heartedly looks for employment, but feels unable to accept jobs because of his GP's advice. He makes a claim for Jobseeker's Allowance, but struggles with the procedures for looking for vacancies online. In the job centre, Daniel meets Katie, who with her young children has been relocated from a homeless hostel in London to a flat in Newcastle. She is claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, but her claim gets suspended (or 'sanctioned') because she's late for an appointment. Without an income, she is forced to instead turn to prostitution and food banks.

The script was researched with the assistance of Department for Work and Pensions employees, who remain anonymous in the credits for fear of losing their jobs. The film doesn't dwell on the reports of job centre workers having targets for the numbers of claimants they sanction, although it features staff being told off by a manager for being helpful. Other details in the film are familiar to anyone who's tried to navigate the benefits system, such as the questions in the work capability assessment: 'can you raise either arm as if to put something in your top pocket?'. Similarly accurate is the music heard when Daniel inevitably gets placed on hold when phoning the benefits office. What would Vivaldi think now if he knew that was the use to which his *Spring*

would be put?

*I, Daniel*

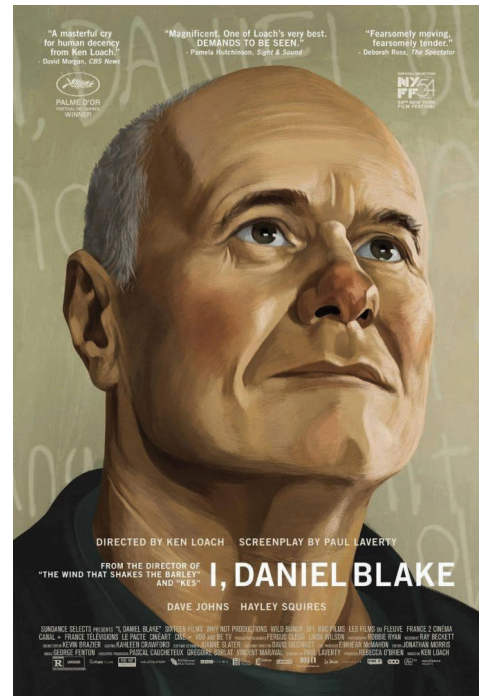
*Blake* has had a wider impact than Loach's recent films. In November, the film's pivotal scene of a spray-paint protest was played out for real when the words 'I, Daniel Blake' appeared on the wall of Exeter job centre. In a Prime Minister's Question Time session, Jeremy Corbyn suggested that Theresa May should watch it when he was criticising the 'institutionalised

barbarity' of the benefits system in relation to unwell claimants. Someone who hadn't seen the film was Damian Green, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who nevertheless felt able to describe it as 'monstrously unfair'. One of his predecessors – Iain Duncan Smith said 'The film has taken the very worst of anything that can ever happen to anybody, lumped it all together and then say 'absolutely, this is life as it is lived by people'. And I don't believe that'. A DWP spokesperson chipped in with 'This film is one person's artistic interpretation of the benefits system. ... It is a work of fiction, not a documentary'.

Loach has said that he finds politicians criticising the film 'predictable'. In a comment to the Press Association, he said 'If they don't know what they are doing to people they are incompetent and shouldn't be in government. If they do know what they are doing then they are not fit to be in government.' Elsewhere, Loach has criticised the Tories for the 'conscious cruelty' of the benefits system. He's a fan of Corbyn, but isn't a member of the Labour Party, having previously backed Left Unity before it was eclipsed by Labour's shift leftwards. He still calls Labour 'the party of the working class'. While Loach may be a left-wing reformist, his film doesn't openly advocate reforms to the benefits system. Instead, it shows the bureaucratic trap where many people too unwell for work fall (being unable to fall into the other trap of employment), and allows us to draw our own conclusions. The film is likely to reinforce the views of those who back reformism, but could equally be interpreted as illustrating how the whole system of which the welfare state is a part is unworkable. Once he has to rely on the benefits system, Daniel finds that it's not really there to benefit him, and its rules and procedures seem designed to make it harder to maintain a claim.

At the age of 80, Ken Loach has lost none of the anger at how capitalism affects people which his previous films have expressed. *I, Daniel Blake* takes elements from his previous work, such as the title echoing that of *My Name Is Joe*, his 1998 film about a recovering alcoholic. And he hired a stand-up comedian to play the lead role, as he had with casting Chrissie Rock as a victim of domestic abuse in 1994's *Ladybird, Ladybird*. Most obviously, *I, Daniel Blake* shares its target with *Cathy Come Home* (1966), both criticising the failings of the welfare state, and both having an impact beyond the screen. Loach himself has said that it's 'shocking' he's made a film in a similar vein to *Cathy Come Home* fifty years on.

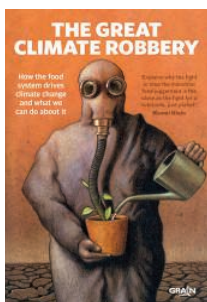
MIKE FOSTER



**"If they don't know what they are doing to people they are incompetent and shouldn't be in government. If they do know, they are not fit to be in government."**

## Grains of Truth

**The Great Climate Robbery.** New Internationalist £9.99.



This volume has been produced by GRAIN, 'a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small farmers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and

biodiversity-based food systems' (grain.org). It consists primarily of excerpts from or summaries of reports issued by them, focussing on how global warming is in part caused by current methods of food production, but also dealing with a number of other topics.

It is claimed that 'the industrial food system is a major driver of climate change', with around half of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the food system. This covers deforestation, food waste, refrigeration, transport, processing and packaging. Farming practices contribute as well, in the form of petrol to run machinery and the use



of chemical fertilisers. A small number of giant fertiliser companies are the major users of shale gas from fracking, and, once applied to the soil, fertilisers result in large amounts of nitrous oxide, which is far more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Cutting out the use of chemical fertilisers could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to ten percent, it is argued, and would allow farmers to rebuild organic matter in the soil and so increase fertility. Of course profit is the force behind these industrial farming methods.

Different kinds of food make different contributions to climate change. The worst are red meat, cheese, fish and poultry, with lentils, fruit, milk and vegetables having the least impact. Processed foods, which use soybeans and palm oil among other products, are big greenhouse gas emitters and are being consumed more and more. Cutting down on meat and

dairy production – which does not imply everyone becoming vegan – could make a major change in emissions.

If industrial agriculture is the main enemy, small farmers are seen as very much part of the solution. Peasants occupy only a quarter of the world's agricultural land but, it is claimed, produce most of the world's food. A brief discussion is given of what counts as a family farm, since some large industrial farms are 'family-owned', but there is no consistent definition of what is a small farm (it varies from one country to another), and it is not even clear from the text whether a small farmer is the same as a peasant. About half of all small farms are in China and India, but small farms have in general been getting smaller. Small farms are more productive than really large ones, and contribute much less to climate change.

The reader is told that 'global food production could be doubled within a decade' if better policies towards small farmers were adopted. But also, 'the world produces plenty of food to feed everyone, year after year', with hunger being caused by poverty and exclusion, not a lack of food. Some further discussion of these points would have been a very good idea.

A couple of chapters contain some interesting material that does not relate very directly to the book's main theme. One deals with restrictions on the use of seeds, which further penalise, and indeed criminalise, small farmers. Another covers aspects of the control of the global food system; for instance, the Gates Foundation has spent \$3bn in agricultural grants, but little of this money actually goes to farmers.

It is not possible now to say definitively how food production will be organised in socialism, but considerations such as those raised here will certainly be central.

**PB**

## Moneyless

**Into The Open Economy.** By Colin R. Turner. Applied Image. 80 pages.



In 2011 Colin Turner put a short video *Free World Charter* on the internet ([www.freeworld.org/en](http://www.freeworld.org/en)) making the case for a moneyless world of free access and making the same point (but not in the language) that we do: that, while the world is capable of providing enough to feed everyone and allow them a decent life, most people's

access to what they need is rationed by the amount of money they earn from working for a wage or salary. The video didn't suggest doing anything other than signing an online charter to show you supported the idea of 'a world without money'.

By comparison, this short book is a disappointment. Turner's approach is to show that what he calls an 'open economy' is possible by pointing to the many examples today where people cooperate to do things without money and where they are motivated to act by other aims than the pursuit of money. This is true of course but Turner goes further and argues that the way to an eventually money-free society is through encouraging and extending these examples.

This is to underestimate what is involved in 'abolishing money'. Money is a feature of a society where goods and services are produced to be bought and sold because they are privately owned. Capitalism is the highest form of such a society, one where the means of production are monopolised by a few who own and control them via companies or the state and who pay people to operate them with a view to making a profit.

To get to a society where people can have free access to what they need instead of having to pay for it, capitalist ownership of the means of production has to be ended and control over their use transferred to the community as a whole. Dispossessing the privileged owning class requires political action on the part of the excluded majority. But not the kind of political action within the system that Turner rightly criticises in the section headed 'The Limitations of Governance':

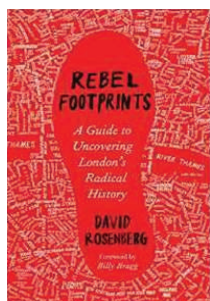
'Being itself *part* of the economy, the government is limited by what it can do ... Government – and its individual members – are all very much subject to the economy, and therefore have only very limited control over it ... State spending and interest rates do not control the economy – they are merely *reactions* to it. When the economy is good, the government spends, when the economy is bad, the government cuts back. Instead of shaping the economy, all the government is really doing is 'housekeeping' the best it can with the fruits of the wider economy on its doorstep.'

But this is not a case for throwing the baby out with the bathwater and rejecting political action altogether in favour of the small-scale local activities Turner mentions (growing your own food, tool libraries, car-pooling, using open source software, building your own home, etc). It's a case for rejecting reformist political action within the system in favour of political action aimed exclusively at revolutionising the basis of society from minority class ownership to democratic common

ownership (thereby making money redundant).  
ALB

## Pro-Labour history

*Rebel Footprints, by David Rosenberg.*  
Pluto Press.



Labour history, like all history, is seen through various lenses, distorting and magnifying certain aspects of reality, filtering out unwanted intrusions. Its resulting narratives reflect fundamental

assumptions and serve to boost and consolidate those convictions. Here, David Rosenberg, presents us with a particular view of Radical London designed with a particular aim in mind. One which, since it already carries 'likes' from Corbyn and the TUC, ought to be pretty obvious.

Such it is not to the uncritical eye. For the best propaganda does not look like propaganda. Ostensibly, this book really does tell the story of 'how defiant grassroots Londoners responded to their circumstances from the beginning of the 1830s until the end of the 1930s' in relation to localities in which they occurred. Here, indeed, are the strikes, the campaigns, the events which any historian of the subject would be bound to include.

Already, however, our vision is limited time-wise. Why 1939? Did history magically end, Fukuyama style, with the invasion of Poland? Of course, this is not Year Zero at all. For the Left Labourite, the Golden Age began and history ended with the general election of July 1945. Hurrah



for the use of troops to smash the dockers! Hurrah for the Indian massacres! Hurrah for the atom bomb! Go Clement go! And since that time, the Labour Party has been a most integral part of the political ruling class, so any account of strikes, campaigns,

## Exhibition Review

### 'Dedicated to All Defenders of Human Freedoms'

Readers will quite probably never have heard of Paul Peter Piech, but may well have seen some of the political posters he produced from the 1950s onwards. An exhibition 'Dedicated to All Defenders of

Ukrainian immigrants to New York; he was stationed in Britain with the US Air Force in the Second World War, and returned here in 1947. He worked in commercial graphic design, and also produced a large number of linocuts as posters to advertise meetings, marches and political causes. He was never a member of a political party but his work essentially supported left-wing positions.

For instance, he produced one poster which showed the stars on the US flag transformed into swastikas. Others opposed war, cruise missiles and torture. One poster was commissioned by Amnesty against torture but was rejected by their head office as liable to offend some supporters: it shows a person being burnt with a cigarette and looks fairly innocuous now. A series of powerful posters on the theme 'Racism is a Prison' covers the US in the 1920s, Auschwitz, Soweto, Bosnia and so on. Other posters deal with the Miners Strike, with particular reference to South Wales.

In 1979 Piech became unpopular among some after he had worked on an exhibition in Iraq, sponsored by Saddam Hussein's government. So he was not always a 'defender of human freedoms'.

The exhibition contains a number of striking and memorable posters. A few are let down, though, by containing too much writing in an angular hard-to-follow script which hardly invites the onlooker to stand and read through them.

PB



Human Freedoms: The Art of Paul Peter Piech' at the People's History Museum in Manchester contains plenty of examples of his work, together with commentary on his career.

Piech (1920–96) was the son of

would inevitably be a Jeremiah (!) against that very Labour Party, which Rosenberg has come to praise. And not, like us, to bury.

What then, is the point of these campaigns, these strikes, that Rosenberg (to give him credit) accurately (bar a few niggles) and with an attractive liveliness (if with also butterfly flitting) describes? Whereto is the admirable sense of solidarity generated by the action of working together for a common cause directed? And how are the questions inevitably posed by such campaigns answered? Why, sir, need you ask! Instead of directing such justifiable anger, such togetherness, such criticism, against the system, the Labourite, consciously or unconsciously, co-opts these sentiments for their own ends.

And these are made clear: A change of political masters; Government charity – 'free' wigs, a council flat, and a nice job

on the bins – for the worker; and a comfy seat on the board for 'his' rep. Apart from capitalism as normal, its wars, its poverty, its misery, this is all we can expect from the resurrection of Corbynite Old Labour. That this alternative to the Blairite New Labour holds any sort of appeal shows the depth to which we have sunk, propelled thence by the twin millstones of Leninist 'Communism' and Labour's 'Socialism' – both in reality one and the same state capitalist nightmare.

As to the alternative, the world turned upside down, the lowly made high and the masters downtrodden, of this, to which a good half of those namedropped herein subscribed, nominally or genuinely, there is no mention. We, and those like us, do not want 'justice and equality', our path is not mere protest, defensive and backward looking, but the revolutionary road to the world made anew.

KAZ

# 50 Years Ago

## Rhodesia

IN THE Commons debate on Rhodesia on December 8 last, Harold Wilson said:

'The present situation in Rhodesia faces Britain with the greatest moral issue she has had to face in the post war world.'

On the same day in the House of Lords, Tory Lord Ferrier was assuring the government:

'I and millions like me could never be persuaded to open fire on our kith and kin in Rhodesia.'



In Salisbury, Ian Smith has said all along that he stands for a settled, civilised way of life against

barbarism.

In other words, however much both sides may disagree on other matters, they are at one in presenting their struggle with each other as a moral issue.

There is of course nothing new in this, although it is something of a mystery, why politicians think it is always necessary. There is no evidence that working class support for capitalism would decline, if they were told the truth about its power struggles.

Capitalism has many conflicts, all of them basically economic in origin. There is no morality involved in them, no human interests, no distinct division between right and wrong.

Wilson's professed moral indignation against Rhodesia, for example, does not at present extend to South Africa, which has never made any secret of its support for the Smith regime.

The reason for this is plain. South Africa is too valuable a trading partner for Britain's Labour government to want to upset.

The African states in the Commonwealth may protest at this, and they also use moral arguments to support their case.

Behind all this fog of confusion and official lies, the processes of capitalism grind inexorably on. They recognise no morality and the only issue they are interested in is a healthy balance sheet.

(*Socialist Standard*, January 1967)

## So, you vote?

DO YOU vote for Labour, the LibDems, the Tories? Maybe you don't vote at all. Maybe you think voting is a waste of time because it doesn't change anything.

Politics seems to be about endless arguments over the same problems without anyone ever getting nearer to solutions. That is why a lot of people think that political activity is a waste of time, that politicians are liars and cheats whose first concern is to look after their own interests.

Voting is a waste, particularly, if you leave it there, at the voting, at the nose counting, and take no further part until the next election.

Democracy means much more than a cross on a bit of paper: it means organising, debating, discussing and examining the world around us to work out how to change it for our benefit. Democracy is too important to be left to the professionals.

But even then democracy is not up to much unless you see that inequality of wealth means inequality of power. That as long as a minority own society, it must be run in their interest. Labour, the LibDems, the Tories, none of them want to do anything about that.

But there is another way.

At present we live under an economic system which can't help but produce wars, crises, pollution, overwork, stress, alienation . . . None of these is necessary. The world could be run on different lines which could get it out of the mess it is in.

That is why we campaign for common and democratic ownership and control of the wealth of the world, and we're asking you to join us in that campaign. If we do that, we can make democracy and equality mean something, and change

the world so that it is run for our benefit, not the tiny minority's.



### Conservatives

### Labour



Capitalism will not collapse or breakdown of its own accord. It has to be consciously done to death by political action by the class of wage and salary workers. Until the working class are moved to do this capitalism will continue to stagger from boom to slump and back again.

Socialists urge that it is futile to try to reform capitalism – the whole system needs to be scrapped and replaced by something better.

The world could be run on different lines which could get it out of the mess it is in. People could organise their affairs so that everyone has free access to the things they need to lead a decent and satisfying life. If the waste and artificial shortages of capitalism were eliminated we could easily produce enough to go over to getting what we need on the basis of the principle from each according to our abilities to each according to our needs. In other words, free access to what we need without having to hand over coloured pieces of paper or to use cards or vouchers of any kind.



# Protests without end?

MOST BELIEVE the sickness of war can be sorted out within the usual channels offered – either a UN force moves in or the troops come home. The former will only compound the problem. The latter can only leave the region concerned more unstable, with warlords and the varying shades of the region's religions vying for political power.

We need to address the root of the problem – the capitalist system itself and vicious competition for profits – and how the problems capitalism creates can only be solved when we abolish the capitalist system itself.

While it is important to oppose war, we need to recognise in whose interests wars are waged. It's hard to think of a single war that did not have its roots in the need of some small elite to make profits. All wars, even small-scale conflicts tend to be fought over

resources, outside markets and areas of influence, trade routes or the strategic points.

To end war – and the need to demonstrate against it – capitalism has to be ended. It needs to be replaced by a global system where the resources of the Earth are common to everyone. Competition and conflict between elites over resources must give way to cooperation for the benefit of all the world's inhabitants.

If you lend your support to a political party or organisation that fails to oppose the real nature of capitalist society, how our world is organised for production and how power is distributed, then you are, in effect, supporting a system that breeds wars.

The Socialist Party asks: Do you want to protest endlessly against each new war as it arises? Or work for a new world of common ownership, democratic control, peace and human welfare?

If you are opposed to war, either oppose capitalism in all its forms or settle down to a life of protests . . .



## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

### JANUARY 2017

#### MANCHESTER

**Saturday 28 January, 2.00 p.m.**

**"Paul Mason and Postcapitalism"**

This talk will examine Paul Mason's book *'Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future'*.

Venue: The Unicorn Pub, 26 Church Street, Manchester M4 1PW

#### EC Meeting

**Saturday 4 February 2017, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.**

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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### Clueless Charities

Shelter, a charity campaigning to end homelessness, celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. Towards the end of 2016 they reminded us that during the season of goodwill 120,000 children in Britain would be homeless. Related news coverage has been grim and predictable. 'A homeless man froze to death on the streets of Birmingham just a day before UK charity Shelter warned more than 250,000 people in England will be homeless this Christmas as high rents, benefit cuts, and a worsening housing crisis create the perfect storm. The body of the unknown man was found in the

West Midlands city at 11.30pm GMT on Wednesday, the coldest night of the year. It is understood the body, found in John Bright Street, is that of a 30-year-old man with no fixed address. Figures compiled by Shelter reveal that 255,000 people across the country are forced to live in hostels and other types of temporary accommodation, or to sleep rough on the streets. London has the highest rate of homelessness. As many as one in 25 residents of the central London borough of Westminster are without a home" (rt.com, 1 December). But what has 50 years on the reformist treadmill achieved? We are informed that presently one in three UK households are on the

'brink' of homelessness. This 'problem' existed long before Shelter and many other charities came into being and will persist for another 50+ years unless we bring an end to capitalism. Oscar Wilde expressed this well: 'their remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by amusing the poor. But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible' (*The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891).



### Free Speech

'Cardiff University in Wales has said it will no longer ban events by controversial speakers, declaring censorship is not the answer. The decision was made by the Cardiff University Students' Union at their annual conference last week, where they passed a motion called *Challenge, Don't Censor*' (patriotnewsagency.com, 3 December). This is good news. Socialists value free and open debate with all opponents, and naturally oppose censorship and safe spaces. George Yancy, a professor of philosophy at Emory University, stated recently 'I refuse to entertain my students with mummified ideas and abstract forms of philosophical self-stimulation. What leaves their hands is always philosophically alive, vibrant and filled with urgency. I want them to engage in the process of freeing ideas, freeing their philosophical imaginations. I want them to lose sleep over the pain and suffering of so many lives that many of us deem disposable. I want them to become conceptually unhinged, to leave my classes discontented and maladjusted' (nytimes.com, 30 November). Such a rare and provocative approach to education has been reported to the Professor Watchlist, a modern-day form of McCarthyism promoted by the conservative youth group Turning Point USA. The Economic League in the UK had similar objectives for the duration of its existence, 1919-1993.

### It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World

'... pyrimethamine, the drug the Sydney Grammar School kids were able to make for \$2 per dose, and which Turing sells for up to \$750, can be bought in India for as little as \$0.10' (qz.com, 2 December). That's capitalism folks!

